

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

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INFO USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 6929

E.O. 11652: GDS

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SUBJECT: LUNCHEON FOR MIGUEL ANGEL BURELLI RIVAS AND SUPPORTERS

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

REF: CARACAS 6848 AND PREVIOUS

1. MY LATEST LUNCHEON FOR VENEZUELAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES AND LEADING SUPPORTERS WAS FOR MIGUEL ANGEL BURELLI RIVAS AND FOUR TOP FIGURES OF THE AMALGAMATION OF INDEPENDENTS WHO SUPPORT HIS CANDIDACY. BURELLI, WHOSE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACY WAS THE ELECTORAL PHENOMENON OF 1968 (THIRD PLACE WITH 22 PERCENT OF THE VOTE), IS HIGHLY INTELLIGENT, SUPREMELY ARTICULATE AND ADVISED BY A GROUP OF SKILLED PROFESSIONAL PEOPLE, BUT UNLESS LIGHTNING STRIKES HE CANNOT POSSIBLY REPEAT HIS PREVIOUS UNEXPECTED SUCCESS. HE IS UNDOUBTEDLY THE MOST PHOTOGENIC, TV-WISE, OF ALL THE CANDIDATES, BUT LACKS MONEY FOR TV. HOWEVER, HIS POLITICAL INFORMATION IS OF CONSIDERABLE INTEREST. FOR EXAMPLE:

A. COPEI OFFERED TO SUPPORT HIS CANDIDACY IF HE WOULD AGREE NOT TO BACK ANY PARTY OF THE OPPOSITION, FOR THE SAKE OF KEEPING AS MANY CANDIDATES AS POSSIBLE IN THE RUNNING.

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BURELLI SAID HE TURNED THE PROPOSAL DOWN. COMMENT:

URD REPORTEDLY ACCEPTED THIS ARRANGEMENT.

B. JOSE VICENTE RANGEL'S CAMPAIGN IS BENEFITTING FROM TEN MILLION BOLIVARS IN OUTSIDE FINANCING OF WHICH FIVE MILLION BOLIVARS IS FROM HIS OWN RESOURCES AND FIVE MILLION BOLIVARS IF FROM FIDEL CASTRO.

C. BURELLI, PRIOR TO ACCEPTING THE NOMINATION OF THE "ALIANZA DE ELECTORES INDEPENDIENTES", OFFERED TO THE DESARROLLISTAS' PEDRO TINOCO THAT TINOCO SUPPORT BURELLI THIS ELECTION, AND IN EXCHANGE BURELLI WOULD SUPPORT TINOCO IN 1978. TINOCO TURNED HIM DOWN.

D. A RECENT PRIZE FIGHT FEATURING FLYWEIGHT CHAMPION BOXER BETULIO IN MARACAIBO WAS LITERALLY TAKEN OVER BY COPEI'S LORENZO FERNANDEZ, WHO PACKED THE STADIUM WITH SUPPORTERS AND GRANDLY CLAIMED CREDIT FOR THE EAGERLY AWAITED BOUT. THE RESULTING IRRITATION OF THE CROWD BACKFIRED ON LORENZO, WHOSE CAMPAIGN HAS SUFFERED A SETBACK IN ZULIA AS A RESULT.

E. AD AFTER ITS INITIAL SUCCESSES, PARTICULARLY IN THE POLLS, IS NOW RUNNING SCARED AND RUNNING OUT OF MONEY.

COMMENT: WE KNEW OF AD'S MONEY PROBLEMS BUT WERE NOT AWARE THE PARTY IS RUNNING SCARED.

2. I REMARKED TO BURELLI RIVAS THAT THE COMMENT PUBLISHED YESTERDAY (CARACAS 6857) BY THE MINISTER OF MINES AND HYDROCARBONS ALLUDING TO A POSSIBLE NATIONALIZATION OF OUR U.S. PETROLEUM INVESTMENTS HAD NOT GONE UNNOTICED BY THIS EMBASSY. I ADDED THAT IF THE GOVERNMENT IN POWER SHOULD IN AN ACT OF DESPERATION SEEK TO EXPROPRIATE OUR COMPANIES JUST BEFORE THE HEATING SEASON BEGAN IN THE UNITED STATES, THE REACTION THERE WOULD BE UNFAVORABLE. BURELLI RIVAS REPLIED THAT HE THOUGHT IT UNTHINKABLE THAT EVEN THE COPEI PARTY WOULD CONTEMPLATE SUCH A STEP. IN GENERAL, HIS ESTIMATE OF THE SITUATION CORROBORATES THAT EXPRESSED IN PARA SEVEN OF CARACAS 6865 (LIMDIS) THAT NO MATTER HOW HIGH TEMPERATURES RUN DURING THE ELECTIONS, CALDERA AND CO. WILL NOT OVERSTEP THE OUTER LIMITS OF PRUDENCE. AS FOR EXPROPRIATION OF FOREIGN ASSETS IN VENEZUELA, BURELLI REPEATED WHAT HE SAID HE HAD TOLD THE PRESS RECENTLY, THAT "UNTIL THE VENEZUELAN GOVERNMENT CAN EFFICIENTLY RUN EL TABLAZO AND FOMENTO AS WELL AS OTHER STATE ENTERPRISES, THERE IS NO POINT IN TALKING OF TRYING TO RUN OTHER FOREIGN-OPERATED ASSETS."

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3. COMMENT: OUR OVERALL IMPRESSION OF THE LUNCHEON WAS THAT BURELLI, AS WERE OTHER CANDIDATES, WAS PLEASED AT THE ATTENTION PAID HIM; THAT HE REALIZES THAT IN THE PRESENT YEAR THERE IS NO PROSPECT FOR HIS VICTORY; BUT THAT, AS IN THE CASE CASE OF TINOCO, HE HOPES TO BUILD UP ENOUGH CREDIT IN THE POLITICAL BANK TO BE A REALLY STRONG CANDIDATE FIVE YEARS HENCE. HOWEVER, HE SAID FRANKLY THAT IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

NO ONE KNEW WHAT THE VENEZUELAN MILITARY WOULD DO IF (AS HE
SEEMED TO ANTICIPATE) EITHER OF THE PRINCIPAL PARTIES,
AD OR COPEI, FUMBLER IN THEIR MANAGEMENT OF THIS COUNTRY.
HE SAID BOTH PRINCIPAL PARTIES WERE LINING UP THEIR MILITARY
ADHERENTS WITH A VIEW TO AN EVENTUAL CONFRONTATION.
MCCLINTOCK

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